DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 694 CE 051 458

TITLE Further Education Is Changing. Opportunities at 14-19.
INSTITUTION Further Education Unit, London (England).; Secondary Science Curriculum Review, London (England).
REPORT NO ISBN-1-85338-083-0
PUB DATE Oct 88
NOTE 7p.; The use of a colored background may affect the legibility of two charts.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Articulation (Education); College School Cooperation; Curriculum Development; *Dropout Programs; *Educational Change; Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; Postsecondary Education; Student Certification; Trend Analysis; *Vocational Education; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS National Council for Vocational Qualifications; *United Kingdom; Youth Training Scheme

ABSTRACT

Institutions of further education and schools have traditionally been viewed as competitors. With the rising unemployment of the late 1970s, however, the further education system in the United Kingdom began reexamining its role in preparing young people for working life. The result was a process-based approach incorporating the elements of induction, negotiation, and common core curricula together with increased counseling and the application of formative and summative assessment techniques. These principles are currently being applied to the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, and Youth Training Scheme programs. The establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications has had an important influence on the further education system. At the interface between schools and colleges, both sectors are seeking a more coherent progression from school to college to working life. To this end, many schools are now providing records of achievement or profiles to give students, their potential employers, and other educational establishments a fuller picture of student experiences and achievements. Increased emphasis is also being placed on planning school and further education provision in light of educational, demographic, and economic factors. Information on further organization examining bodies is provided. (MN)

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FURTHER EDUCATION IS CHANGING
Opportunities at 14-19

October 1988 *ISBN 1 85338 083 0*

Institutions of further education (FE) and schools have experienced radical changes in recent years. The Further Education Unit (FEU) and Secondary Science Curriculum Review (SSCR) have set up a working party to examine the implications of these changes. The first paper produced by the working party highlighted the implications of changes in school science for FE lecturers.* However, when the changes in the FE system were considered, it became evident that they have broad curricular implications rather than being specific to science and technology. The aim of this bulletin is to highlight the more significant changes taking place in FE that might affect school-leavers.

* *School Science is Changing – Implications for Further Education* FEU/SSCR, 1988.

Background

Institutions of FE and schools are often seen as competitors, but there is good reason for them to collaborate in the provision of a comprehensive and coherent post-16 education system. The curriculum process should be a thread throughout the system. Students should be prepared at each stage for progression to the next, and given the opportunity to develop skills that can be applied in a range of situations and will lead to a satisfying work life. FE seeks to provide continuing education and training as work skills change and clients seek recreational opportunities.

Process-based education in FE

In the late 1970s it became clear that, with rising unemployment, young people had fewer opportunities to obtain the job of their choice or to change jobs until they found a satisfactory working environment. Thus the FE system began to look more closely at its role in the preparation of young people for working life. This led to a variety of schemes, particularly those based on *A Basis for Choice* (FEU, 1979). At about the same time, the Manpower Services Commission (now called the Training Agency) introduced the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) to increase training opportunities for the young unemployed by providing them with on- and off-the-job training. (YOP was replaced by the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in 1983.) A common feature of many of these schemes was the use of a vocational area to deliver a common core curriculum based on the development of generic and transferable skills. This *process-based approach* incorporates the elements of induction*, negotiation** and common core curricula, together with increased counselling and the application of formative and summative assessment techniques. There have been a number of FEU publications giving guidance on these processes, the most recent being *Relevance, Flexibility and Competence* (FEU, 1987) which summarises much of the earlier FEU work.

Currently, the principles of process-based education are being applied to the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE), Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), and YTS programmes, the first two crossing the school/college interface. Further, the major examining and validating bodies are requiring these approaches to be incorporated into many of their recent schemes. (Information on the FE examining and validating bodies is supplied at the end of this bulletin.)

* The process of introducing the student to the process-based approach to education.

** The process of agreeing a programme of study with a student on the basis of previous experience and ultimate goals.

Youth Training Scheme (YTS)

Although YTS has existed for several years, it is not a homogeneous scheme and there are distinct differences between the context and approaches of the various providers. YTS is organised by managing agents on behalf of the Training Agency. The managing agent is responsible for the recruitment of trainees, arranging their placement with on- and off-the-job providers, and the necessary administrative and financial processes. The managing agent may be a company, a college or LEA, another training agency, or an organisation set up for this specific purpose.

Many companies use YTS as the first stage of entry to apprenticeship. In some industries (e.g. construction, pottery manufacture) it has become almost the only route into employment for school-leavers. As an overall scheme, YTS is for young people of all abilities in the age range 16+ to 18+; entry into particular programmes may be restricted by the type of work or the level of study required.

YTS is a two-year scheme, largely based in industrial and commercial establishments, with the provision of approved off-the-job training. In addition to acting as managing agents for some programmes, FE colleges are major providers of off-the-job training for other managing agents; trainees gain additional educational experiences and qualifications.

YTS programmes have to take into account the issue of equal opportunities. The needs of students from ethnic minorities have to be considered and provision made for those with special physical and educational needs.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ)

An important influence on the FE system has been the establishment of NCVQ, following the recommendations of a working party which reviewed vocational qualifications. The intention is to create a system of post-16 vocational qualifications that certificates occupational competence and its elements, namely, acquisition of skills, their application in the workplace, and the appropriate knowledge and understanding (NCVQ, 1987).

This system is intended to be:

- comprehensive,
- coherent,
- transferable and
- comprehensible,

and to improve access and progression opportunities for those in employment or education.

NCVQ faces the problem of mapping a clear relationship between existing qualifications, of which there are over a thousand, and clarifying the routes to a relevant and transferable qualification for the benefit of trainees, teachers and employers.

For these benefits to be realised, colleges need to provide appropriate and continuing guidance and counselling facilities, review assessment techniques to measure actual performance, consider different modes of attendance and delivery, and refine methods of recording achievement (including cumulative credit towards an award).

Competence-based schemes will be introduced across a wide range of FE courses. The assessment programme will have to incorporate the assessment of competences gained in the workplace and the accreditation of prior learning (APL)*. This is likely to lead to modular assessment processes which will require careful management to ensure that students' learning experiences are part of a coherent curriculum.

At first sight the implications of the work of NCVQ for schools may appear limited, but in terms of school/college link courses, CPVE and TVEI schemes there is a need to match the expected pre-16 student outcomes with the post-16 to aid their progression through the system. A firm grounding in relevant learning processes and generic, transferable skills will help students as they enter the NCVQ system.

It is important that counselling and careers advice in schools reflect the changes in FE courses and approaches so that appropriate information can be given to pupils at 14+ and 16+. For example, if a 14-year-old seeks a career in the 'caring' field, the teacher should know something of the competences to be achieved for the award of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). Choices at 14-16 years should not only be complementary to these competences, but should seek to widen the range of options available at later stages. In particular, subject material and learning styles which assist in preparation for adulthood may well be a better foundation than elementary vocational skills at this stage.

At the time of writing, NCVQ is holding discussions with the Schools Examination Council (SEC) to determine the relationship between NVQs and GCSE 'A' and 'AS' level qualifications.

* APL - the process whereby previous learning or relevant experience is accredited as part of a qualification.

Clearly the establishment of NCVQ raises staff development issues for schoolteachers as well as college lecturers. Since the organisation of staff development programmes is the responsibility of the LEA for both FE and schools, a useful step would be to arrange joint staff development sessions between school and college staff with respect to NCVQ and related issues.

School/FE interface

At the interface between schools and colleges, both sectors are seeking a more coherent progression from school to college to working life. To this end, many schools and colleges now provide 'records of achievement' or 'profiles' to give students, their potential employers and other educational establishments a fuller picture of their experiences and achievements; a useful step forward would be the development of a more consistent system of 'profiling'.

There should be continuity rather than repetition of learning with respect to the 14-19 age group. Colleges and schools should form joint planning groups for their shared and successive provision. Link courses have enabled many school pupils to experience the more adult atmosphere of the college, become familiar with the broader range of equipment generally available in college, or widen their curriculum into areas not offered in their school. Work experience is also an area in which co-operative planning can occur between schools and colleges.

CPVE and TVEI are specific programmes where schools and colleges have the potential for co-operation. This often occurs through the provision of link courses for school pupils, for planned progression into the college at 16+, and through 'consortium arrangements' by which the school and college share provision and support for the student.

Figure 1 shows a specific example of the mainstream BTEC course pattern, and Figure 2 the general progression routes through the FE system.

Figure 1

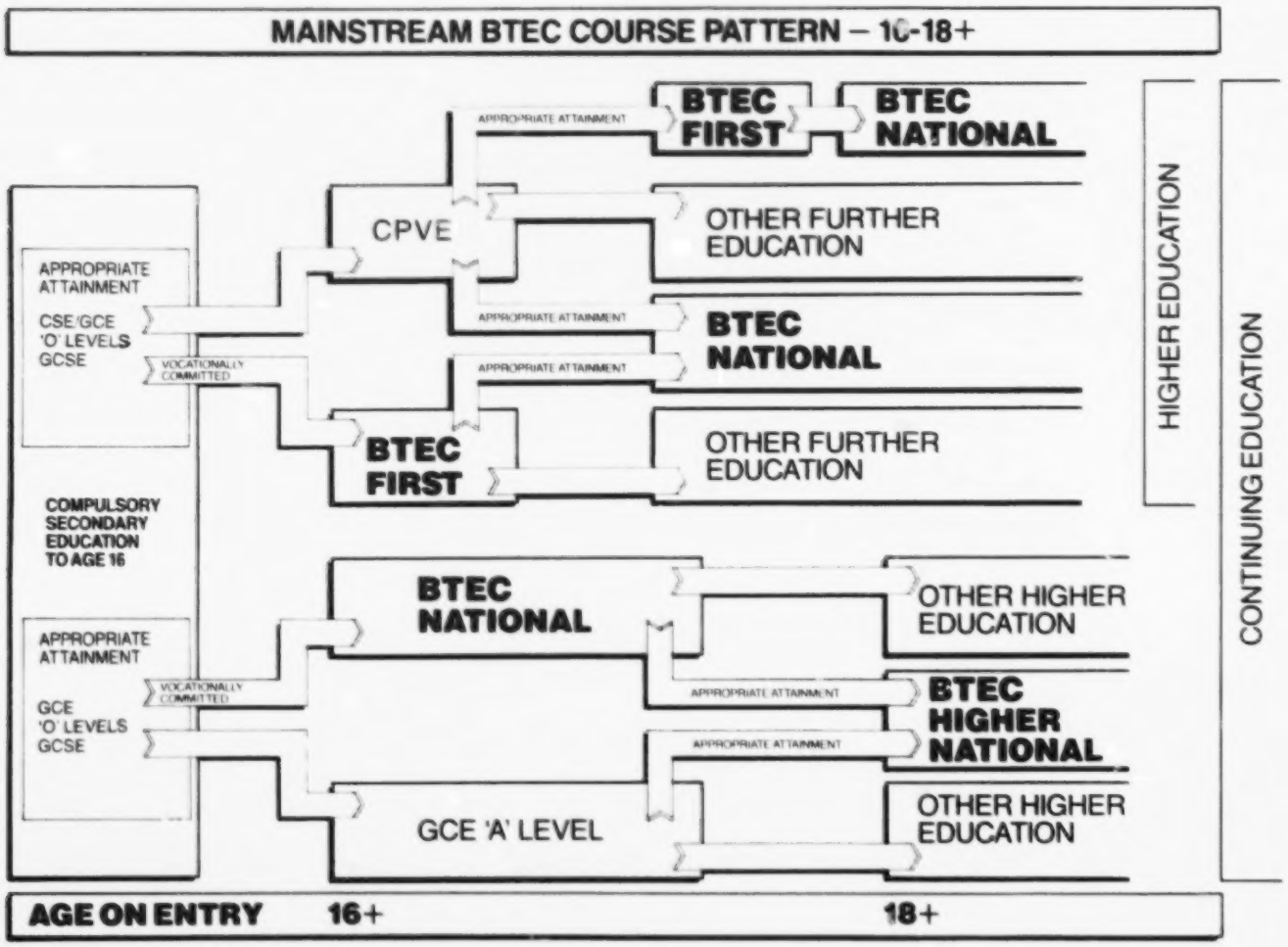
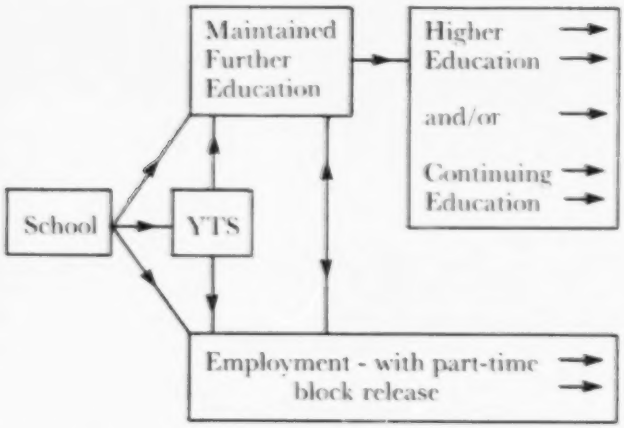


Figure 2 Progression through the FE system



Typical courses in maintained further education include 'A' Level, 'AS' Level, GCSE, CPVE*, BTEC*, C&G*, RSA*, professional qualifications*.

* These schemes may soon be affected by NCVQ requirements.

College organisational issues

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on the planning of school and FE provision in the light of educational, demographic and economic factors. These have led to changes in both the organisational structure and the curricular range of FE colleges. There have been a number of college reorganisations and amalgamations, and the creation of tertiary colleges by merging school sixth forms and FE colleges. These are aimed at providing a wider and more co-ordinated range of options for students who wish to continue their education beyond the compulsory school-leaving age.

Final remarks

This bulletin has highlighted some of the major issues that have affected, or are currently affecting, the FE system. These issues have been described briefly so that schoolteachers may be in a better position to advise pupils about entry to the FE system after schooling. Critical issues include progression, continuity and credit accumulation as the student moves into, and through, the FE system. It has been suggested that joint staff development sessions between schoolteachers and college lecturers would be an important step towards alleviating some of the difficulties faced by FE entrants.

Key points

1. FE is developing a process-based approach that incorporates the elements of induction, negotiation and common core curricula together with increased counselling and the application of formative and summative assessment techniques.

Continuity

2. FE colleges and schools should be collaborators in providing a comprehensive and coherent education system.

3. Colleges and schools should form joint planning groups for their shared and successive provision.

4. Subject material and learning styles which assist in preparation for adulthood will be a better foundation at 14+ than elementary vocational skills.

Progresssion

5. Curriculum process should ensure progression throughout the education system.

6. Choices at 14-16 should seek to widen the range of options available at later stages.

Credit accumulation

7. A more consistent system of 'records of achievement' or 'profiles' should be developed between schools and colleges.

INSET

8. LEAs (individually or regionally) should organise joint staff development programmes for school and FE staff in relation to the implications of NCVQ.

Further reading

Relevance, Flexibility and Competence, FEU, 1987
'NCVQ and its Implications' *National Vocational Qualifications Bulletin No. 1*, FEU, 1988
CPVE in Action, FEU, 1985
Profiles in Action, FEU/Longman, 1984
Progressing to College: A 14-16 Core, FEU, 1985
School Technology is Changing – Implications for Schools and FE, FEU/SSCR, 1988.

Further education examining and validating bodies

Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC)

BTEC is a national validating body charged with advancing the quality and availability of work-related education for those in, or preparing for, employment. Quality and vocational relevance are maintained by the approval of centres, both educational and industrial, offering courses, the validation of proposals for courses, monitoring the delivery of courses and certification of results. The curriculum design framework and much of the content is specified by BTEC, but centres are able to submit for approval curriculum materials designed to meet local needs.

Assessment

BTEC units of study are expressed in terms of learning outcomes or competences (called principal objectives). Working within the guidelines produced by BTEC, centres are required to devise, and submit for approval, a detailed assessment strategy, the main focus of which is continuous assessment, both formative and summative. Considerable emphasis is placed upon the methods of assessment and the careful construction of criteria against which students are assessed. The aim is to ensure the validity of the assessments in relation to the principal objectives of the unit. Centre staff, in collaboration where necessary with employers, are responsible for the process of assessment.

Quality control

The standards of BTEC courses are embedded in their design and approval during validation, a key feature in the design being the needs of employment. BTEC uses a number of quality control measures, in addition to validation, to ensure that standards are maintained. Moderation is an important aim of the quality assurance strategy. A moderator is appointed to each approved course and, through a pattern of regular visits (usually two or three each year), is able to monitor, provide a developmental focus for, and report to BTEC on a variety of centre processes, particularly those relating to course management, teaching and learning strategies, assessment and, increasingly, to encourage centres to develop their own processes for internal validation, review and evaluation. Moderators receive regular training and are supported by a network of full-time regional co-ordinators to whom any difficulties can be referred. In addition to moderation, BTEC operates a range of regional sampling procedures and a variety of statistical monitoring techniques to check on student and centre performance.

City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G)

City and Guilds of London Institute is an independent organisation operating under Royal Charter. It is a non-profit-making body with an income derived mainly from the examination entry fees paid by candidates. It exists to serve industry and the nation through the encouragement of technical and vocational education and training, and is the largest technical and vocational testing and certificating body in the United Kingdom. The Institute is governed by its council, and by representatives of the founders, industry and education, at national and regional levels. Education and training policy is determined by the Policy Committee for Education and Training, which is a national forum and the custodian of national standards for the unified system of certification established by City and Guilds in association with the regional bodies for further education in England and Wales. It includes representatives from industry (both employers and employees), the education service, government departments, HM Inspectors, the Training Agency, professional bodies, the regional advisory councils for further education, and other interested parties. National advisory committees, each covering a main area of industrial activity, and reporting to the policy committee, seek to apply those policies within their industrial sectors by identifying education and training needs that can be met from C&G services and by recommending the provision of schemes. Approval for the introduction of these schemes is given by the examinations committee, a sub-committee of the policy committee. Responsibility for the maintenance of the agreed standards rests with a range of examination subject committees. Like the policy committee, all these committees include representatives from industry, the education service and government departments.

In addition, C&G provides the administrative servicing for the National Examinations Board for Agriculture, Horticulture and Allied Industries, which is responsible for the monitoring and assessment of schemes for full-time and part-time courses in these areas currently administered by national and regional examining bodies other than BTEC.

The role of C&G

C&G activities are broadly similar at all levels of education and training in which they operate, and consist of schemes comprising:

- *syllabuses* to encourage the provision of courses of study and practical work, by making available to education and training institutions a national curriculum structure of regulations and syllabuses, leading to:
- *assessments or examinations* to measure practical competence (skills, knowledge, attitudes, experience) related to standards publicly agreed with industry and the education service as the basis of:
- *certificates and awards* recognised nationally and internationally as qualifications for entry to industry, public services and further education.

The pattern of awards

C&G offers a system of qualifications that provides individuals with progressive recognition of their abilities. Individual examinations are classified into three main levels of general ability. This terminology has been used by C&G since 1975, but the terms are not quite the same as those proposed by the NCVQ and may have to be adjusted next year.

Much of the pattern of awards is geared to part-time education for those who are employed, but in the early stages some of the relevant courses may be full-time. The requirements of the many industries and occupations vary enormously, but they all fit within this general framework. The career levels apply to any form of employment and place no external constraints on the development of curricula in education or on career patterns in employment. The educational standards to be achieved in colleges are set by C&G in collaboration with industry, and the education curriculum is made compatible with relevant industrial training objectives.

Industrial training and testing services

Professional services

C&G testing services help client organisations to develop and validate programmes of training and assessment by providing expertise and resources. Testing services staff can prepare training objectives, plan training programmes, prepare assessment materials, arrange for programmes to lead to a certificate, and organise the administration of client examinations. Alternatively, they can train client organisations to carry out these procedures themselves.

Skills testing service

The C&G skills testing service specialises in providing firms, industry training boards, training centres and colleges with a service in performance testing. Such testing aims to measure practical competence to standards which have been identified by analytical methods and agreed with industry. The assessment is carried out in close association with industrial experts. Testing covers most major industries in the primary production, manufacturing and service sectors. There are over 50,000 entries for C&G skills tests each year; tests are also undertaken by other agencies based on C&G development. Skills tests are listed under the appropriate industrial sector.

Accredited centres

C&G has now established a number of accredited centres throughout the UK, on a pilot basis, where its skills tests can be administered. The centres cater for individuals who may not have had access to further education and training qualifications but have acquired substantial levels of skill and knowledge and require these to be recognised and certificated.

The range of subjects covered by the skills tests is being extended all the time, but those made available initially are Horticulture, Engineering, Construction, Electronics, Retail Distribution, Hotel, Catering and Food

The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Examinations Board

The RSA Examinations Board, a registered charity, is one of the largest examining bodies in the country with interests in both general and vocational qualifications. Over 600,000 candidates enter for RSA examinations each year, at over 6,000 centres.

The RSA's objective is to offer schemes that assess competence to clearly defined criteria. These schemes are worked out by many representatives of education and industry who work together as members of RSA committees.

RSA schemes range from the pre-vocational level for those still at school, to post-graduate level. Schemes are taken by students, adult learners, employees, employers, and teachers and trainers. RSA awards are recognised for entry and exemption by professional bodies and for higher education.

RSA is involved in all national vocational initiatives, including records of achievement. It has developed its qualifications in line with the structure of the NCVQ (National Council for Vocational Qualifications); some of its qualifications have already received NVQ conditional accreditation. The RSA also has an agreement with the Southern Examining Group for GCSE to offer RSA/GCSE cross-certification in certain subjects.

Vocational qualifications
There is a wide range of RSA awards for those interested in acquiring the full range of skills and abilities necessary for a particular occupation. The schemes can be taken either at college or in the workplace.

The occupational areas available are:

- Clerical and Administrative
- Business and Financial
- Secretarial
- Reception
- Retail Distribution
- Warehousing, Storage and Distribution
- Road Transport

Subject certificates
RSA provides a large number of single-subject certificates in the business, commercial and modern languages areas. These examinations are held up to five times a year.

Most of these certificates are offered at three levels, although modern languages have a more complex structure:

Stage I	– Elementary
Stage II	– Intermediate
Stage III	– Advanced

GCSE/RSA certification
Successful performance in the following subjects can lead to both RSA and GCSE certification from the Southern Examining Group (SEG):

- Economics
- Information Technology (modular)
- Keyboarding Applications (modular)
- Statistics

It is planned to add further to the list.

Pre-vocational education
RSA has been involved in pre-vocational education for a number of years and aims to prevent an artificial division of education into the "academic" and "vocational".

Practical skills profile scheme
This provides a method of certification based on a bank of predefined cross-curricular competences from which teaching teams can select items most appropriate to their courses.

Pre-vocational (Clerical) and (Distribution) courses
These provide a focus for developing relevant skills and abilities within a wider curriculum, including GCSE.

English as a second language
This is a qualification for adults resident in the UK for whom English is a second language. The profile certificate lists the competences achieved by the candidate.

Other examining and validating bodies

While those listed above account for the majority of students of FE, examining and validating bodies, there are many other local and national bodies which issue certificates and accredit courses of study. They include the London Chamber of Commerce (LCC), Pitmans, regional advisory councils and most professional institutions. It is envisaged that most of these bodies will eventually seek NCVQ approval for their schemes (at least up to technician level).

General

Access to FE courses is sometimes made difficult by rigid entrance requirements. However, more flexible approaches which look at the likelihood of students achieving success on a particular course are becoming more widespread. NCVQ should hasten this process by placing greater emphasis on the accreditation of prior learning. Similarly, learning achieved through experience in the workplace should be recognised for entry and exemption due to progression purposes.

Information and publications may be obtained from the following addresses:

- Further Education Unit, 2 Orange Street, London WC2H 7WE (telephone: 01-321 0433)
- Secondary Science Curriculum Review, Newcombe House, 45 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3JB (telephone: 01-229 1234)
- National Council for Vocational Qualifications, 222 Euston Road, London N1 2BZ (telephone: 01-387 9898).
- Business and Technician Education Council, Central House, Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0HH (telephone 01-388 3288)
- City and Guilds of London Institute, 76 Portland Place, London WIN 4AA (telephone: 01-580 3050)
- Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board, John Adam Street, Adelphi, London WC2N 6EZ (telephone: 01-930 5115)